



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

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F-1122839
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MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

BIOMETRIC COLLECTION BACKLOG IN THE UNITED STATES **FOR INFORMATION**

SUMMARY

- The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with information on the current biometric backlog in the United States (US) and the planned way forward.
- Since March 2020, clients in the US have not been able to submit biometrics due to the closure of two Visa Application Centres (VACs) and 133 Application Support Centers (ASCs), located in the US. This has resulted in a backlog of over 8,000 pending biometric enrollments.
- The majority of these biometric collection locations resumed services in July and August 2020, but due to sanitary measures resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, they are operating at limited capacity.
- To meet the current biometric collection demand and to facilitate collection should additional pressures emerge in the US, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is in discussion with the VAC Contractor to set up temporary VACs in San Francisco and Seattle. These temporary VACs would provide supplementary capacity to the permanent network in the US.

BACKGROUND:

- Since 2013, pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding between IRCC and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), IRCC clients in the US can provide their biometrics at any of 133 ASCs.
- In addition to the ASCs, there are also two VACs located in Los Angeles and New York that provide biometric collection and administrative support services to IRCC clients.
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- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all ASCs and VACs located in the US have been closed since March 2020. As a result, there are now over 8,000 clients waiting to provide their biometrics at one of these locations.

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- The current backlog of 8,000 biometric enrolments represents approximately 10% of the enrolments taken by the ASC network in 2019.

Number of Biometrics Pending in the US by Line of Business

	Pending Biometrics in US as of August 10, 2020	% of total Pending Biometrics in US as of August 10, 2020
Grand Total	7,887	100%
Total Temporary Resident	5,811	73.68%
Study Permit	505	6.4%
Temporary Resident Visa	4,085	51.79%
Work Permit	1,221	15.48%
Total Permanent Resident	2,076	26.32%

Data source: IRCC Cognos as of July 7 and August 10, 2020

CURRENT STATUS:

- The majority of biometrics collection points resumed services in July and August, specifically:
 - July 13, 2020: 13 ASCs reopened
 - July 20, 2020: 41 ASCs & New York VAC reopened
 - July 27, 2020: 75 ASCs reopened
 - 4 ASCs & Los Angeles VAC reopening to be confirmed due to current local conditions.
- Due to COVID-19 sanitary measures being implemented, biometric collection sites are operating at limited capacity. For example:
- Based on the number of appointment slots being offered, the Department estimates that it could take over six months to eliminate the backlog in certain regions of the US. As such, the Department is actively exploring the establishment of temporary VACs to add additional biometric collection capacity, in order to facilitate business resumption in the US and accelerate the reduction of the backlog.
- IRCC intends to open temporary VACs in San Francisco and Seattle. These key markets make up 9.28% and 12.5%, of IRCC clients volumes at ASCs, respectively, and are locations where the VAC Contractor is already established with other client governments. The ability
- The temporary VACs would open in fall 2020, for a period of approximately one year and will offer biometric collection services, only. Other administrative support services such as passport transmission would remain available at the VACs in Los Angeles and New York.

- The Department has determined that the temporary VACs are sufficient and that standing up additional, permanent VACs is not necessary, as

COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

- The communications approach for the opening of new temporary VACs in the US will be affected by what is happening in Canada, in particular whether Service Canada is once again collecting biometrics from IRCC applicants.

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there will still be some permanent residence applicants whose application will remain at a standstill until they are able to give their biometrics at a Service Canada location. Key messages and responsive Q&A's

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NEXT STEPS:

- Work across the Department with multiple stakeholders and with the service provider has begun. The Department has developed an exception-based schedule which will allow for a fall 2020 opening for these temporary VACs.
- IRCC will continue to closely monitor the biometrics backlog and work with both the USCIS and the VAC Contractor to increase their biometric collection capacity, while maintaining safe conditions at their locations for both clients and staff.

DM Tapley e-approved 2020-08-20

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